

Program Purpose

The Washington Scholars program recognizes the importance of educational excellence to the future economic and societal vitality of this state by contributing to the retention of the best and brightest of the state's high school graduates. Recipients are chosen based on academic excellence, leadership and community service contributions.

These outstanding citizens are incented to pursue higher education in Washington using the in-state scholarship offered through the program. The hope is that they will remain Washington residents and contribute through their professional and community service.

Program Highlights

- Since 1981, more than 3,000 students have received this widely known and respected scholarship.
- Recognizes three students per legislative district (147 new awards annually).
- A large majority remain in-state to return the state's investment through professional and continued community service activities.
- Scholars receive up to four academic years of scholarship and must maintain a 3.30 cumulative GPA to receive the award after the first year.
- The award is indexed to public tuition, and may be used at accredited in-state public or private colleges or universities.
- In-state private colleges match the state award on a dollar-for-dollar, with institutional gift aid.

Effect of proposed cuts

The Governor's proposed 2011-13 biennial budget suspends the Washington Scholars Program for new recipients. The budget fulfills commitments to previously selected recipients. The suspension would result in:

- Elimination of 147 new scholarships each year for the 2011, 2012, and possibly 2013 award years (a loss of up to three cohorts of new recipients unable to access scholarship funding).
- A reduction in direct state financial aid of \$2.8 million in the 2011-13 biennium.
- "Brain drain" away from the state. Program suspension increases the likelihood that these top performing students may seek education and careers outside of Washington.
- Higher reliance on student loans and other forms of financial aid, if available, in a time of limited resources.
- Possible shift in enrollment patterns to lower cost institutions due to reduced financial assistance.
- Loss of more than \$921,000 in matching institutional gift aid required for Scholars attending in-state private colleges.

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